Fellowship in Prayer

"For a world united in prayer"

The earth is but one country
and mankind its citizens.

Ye are the fruits of one tree,
and the leaves of one branch.

— Bahá'u'lláh

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OUR PURPOSE

To promote the practice of prayer among ALL religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God, regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

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FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

22 East 29th Street New York 16, N.Y.

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And Abraham drew near and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?

Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?

That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

And the Lord said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes.

Suppose there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it.

And he spake unto him yet again, and he said, Suppose forty are found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake.

And he said unto him, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Suppose thirty are found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there.

And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Suppose twenty are found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake.

And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Suppose ten are found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake.

And the Lord went his way, as soon as he had finished communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place.

Genesis 18:23-33.

EDITORIAL

THE BAN ON PRAYER: ITS IMPLICATIONS

Recently we have commented on the challenge facing religion in this age, as it attempts to reach the minds of the generation coming to maturity. Fundamental to this is the recognition that our time is unlike any that men have known for centuries, that every facet of civilized life is being transformed, and hence the truths of religion must be communicated in non-creedal, non-doctrinal ways acceptable to the typical modern mind. Implicit in all this is the further recognition that the secularization of our life has already advanced to an ominous degree.

There have been numerous indications of this tendency during the past generation and recently we have experienced one of the most dramatic of all. The Supreme Court has decreed that it is unconstitutional to institute daily prayers in the public schools of New York and, by implication, in any public school in the country. Banner headlines announced this momentous event, people talked about it with a sense of shock and unbelief; some rejoiced, some deplored what had happened, but no one was indifferent. The furore touched everyone to some degree. Suddenly a new, tremendous emphasis was given to prayer, it became a public issue of the first magnitude. What was most impressive about the whole controversy was the undoubted fact that people after all do care about prayer! Many were surprised that the subject received such far-reaching attention.

We feel it is only the beginning and we ask our readers to prepare themselves for more similar decision from the court, each one further restricting the role of religion in public schools and, indeed, all public life. The little band of agnostics and atheists that triggered the ban on prayer will not stop here and will be joined by others who share their philosophy. Their ranks will grow, they will push religion to the wall, and they will have the letter of the law on their side. If prayer is illegal, Christmas carols and Easter pageants are illegal, and all mention of God on state property is illegal. Since radio and television are geared to an audience of all faiths and of no faith, what is to prevent the atheists, backed by law, from outlawing all references to religion whatever in these media? The worst is yet to come and we had better be prepared for it.

If the ban on prayer is legal in 1962, then it was legal ten years ago and a hundred years ago. Why was no similar case brought forward before this, why was there no decision from the court before now? Because the climate of our time called for such a decision and the times before our own were not ready for it. The decision was a logical outgrowth

of the widespread agnosticism and skeptical outlook of our era. An examination of the important decision of the high court over the last century will show that the court has reflected—for the most part unwittingly—the mode of thinking current in each generation, the thinking that has passed into the dominant world-view of people of each age. Thus the ban on prayer in the public schools of New York may be interpreted as a *symptomatic* decision. If so, more are inevitable.

Everyone for whom prayer is the soul of religion, and the deepest beauty and consolation of their lives, must feel alarm at what has happened, and at what they feel *will* happen, mingled with a sense of sadness and frustration. They know that prayer is the fountainhead of human character and they know what it will mean to deprive young people of the chance to acknowledge daily their dependence on God, the chance even to think of God in the midst of other duties. They know how difficult it is to attain spirituality, to make contact with God, to overcome the ego and the blandishments of the senses. They know that without religious influences early in life these attainments are impossible. They know that prayer is above all an attitude—not only toward the Creator, but towards life itself, and towards their fellow men. They know that this attitude is only gradually developed, maintained with difficulty, needing daily nurturing, and easily lost. For them the decision of the court has struck with the most painful impact of all.

The President has said that the remedy is in our hands—to counteract the effect of the decision we should pray more at home and make our church attendance and religious living more meaningful than ever. If the court's decree would really lead us to pray more and to esteem prayer more highly than we have, nothing would be lost. Perhaps it is really a blessing in disguise after all. Perhaps when carols are banned, when all reference to God is eliminated from public institutions, our children will see their parents worshipping together, at home as well as at church, grace before meals will become a habit again, families will not be ashamed to sing carols at Christmas, and God will enter as a greater reality into our everyday lives. We will all rejoice if this is the result. But will it be? *It is up to us.* God, we know, *can* do everything. But he *will not* do everything—this also is evident. We must participate with him in whatever his plan is for humanity. The opportunity is ours.

But we must be more realistic about our religion. We must not be deceived by the faithful numbers who sit with us in church on Sunday. *There are more who never enter a church* and many who do are en-

tertaining ideas about God and religion that were appropriate a century ago but are archaic today. All across the country there are millions who have repudiated the basis on which religious spokesmen have tried to impart religion to their fellows. Most people do not yet have any idea how deeply the virus of skepticism and agnosticism has entered into the life of the nation and the world. The clergy has grown timid, compromising, materialistic. Our large cities are honeycombed with atheism, to an extent most religious people do not dream of. One student, when asked about the prayer ban, replied: "It won't make any difference, religion is dead anyway, and this proves it." There are vast numbers of his generation who feel the same way.

Religion is on the defensive everywhere, it is fighting for its life, and we cannot serve its cause by quoting scripture to unbelievers or asking them to believe in dogmas which the modern mind rejects. We must examine all the great world religions and present the truths common to all of them as *the truths of religion itself,* and the fundamental truth, in the end the only truth for us, is that man is divine and has it in his power to experience God directly. This is what we must pray for, what we must preach from our pulpits, what we must tell the agnostics who hunger for the same experience as we. They do not want doctrines or creeds any more, they want the truth itself.

It is a new Armageddon that we have been plunged into, one far more subtle and insidious than the Bible literalists have ever conceived. No visible conflagrations, no awesome blasts of all-engulfing war between the hosts of righteousness and evil, but a life-and-death struggle between minds and ideologies. *"We wrestle not against flesh and blood but...against powers, against the rulers of darkness, against spiritual wickedness in high places."* (Eph. 6:12) This is the supreme conflict of this century and its outcome will determine the fate of humanity for hundreds, perhaps thousands of years to come. The Supreme Court decision is the first momentous victory that the army of godlessness has won.

We urge all spiritually-motivated people to intensify their spiritual practices, to hold more firmly than ever before to the ideal of religion, to keep it before their vision with greater constancy and dedication than they ever have. Then, whatever happens to us and to our world, we will have done all we could, we will not have given into discouragement and fatalism, and may leave to those who come after us an ideal of life, a spiritual heritage, a truth about human destiny, which they may embrace and in their turn hand on to succeeding generations.

BAHÁ'I: A NEW WORLD RELIGION

THIS IS THE FIFTIETH anniversary of the visit of Abdu'l-Bahá, son of the founder of the Bahá'i movement, to the United States. Celebrations commemorating his visit are being held in Bahá'i areas throughout the country. So it is fitting at this time that we present, in the following four pages, some basic aspects of this world-wide movement which Arnold Toynbee has said should be considered as an independent religion, not as an offshoot either of Christianity or Islam.

Photographs of Abdu'l-Bahá reveal a saintly-looking man and from all accounts of him he was a remarkable personality, embodying the qualities that have distinguished true men of God everywhere, in all ages. His utterances are those of a man devoted to a great cause, imbued with the desire to help humanity move closer to its age-old dream of brotherhood, unity, and justice for all. That such a man regarded his father, Bahá'u'lláh, as a prophet of God is the most impressive testimony of all. Always it is the character of a man that is most eloquent and persuasive, and from the dedicated life and personality of Abdu'l-Bahá we can gain some conception of what Bahá'u'lláh himself may have been.

ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING aspects of the Bahá'i movement is its concept of "progressive revelation," which denies that the eternal truths of religion were revealed once and for all, at a given point in time, and insists that they are revealed to a succession of prophets at different and critical periods of history, and that each genuine prophet gives us deeper insights into God's purposes for humanity.

In the light of this concept, however, it is surprising, and disappointing, to read the following in one of the official Bahá'i booklets: "Bahá'is believe that God...is unknowable, and that only through the Divine Prophets Who, like perfect mirrors, reflect His attributes and His will, is it possible to have any knowledge of God and to worship Him."

THIS IS DIFFICULT to reconcile with the recorded statements of many saints and mystics who were not prophets but who knew God directly, and with the fundamental teachings of history's great prophets themselves—Krishna, Buddha, Jesus—who declared unanimously that God (or Truth, or the Divine Reality) can be known directly and *is* to be known—that such direct and personal experience, indeed, is the whole meaning of religion and the purpose of life.

It would be helpful if any of our readers familiar with the Bahá'i religion could clarify this important point. —*P.H.*

BASIC FACTS OF THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH

W. Kenneth Christian

THE WORD "Bahá'i comes from the name of the Founder of the Faith—Bahá'u'lláh ("the Glory of God"). The Faith of Bahá'u'lláh is called the "Bahá'i World Faith." There are three reasons for this.

First, Bahá'is live in more than two hundred and forty countries of the world. Bahá'is are people who formerly had different and conflicting religious backgrounds. They had been Buddhists, Jews, Muslims, Zoroastrians, Hindus, Protestants, Catholics, or else they had no religion at all. They have found in the Bahá'i Faith a basis of unity that makes the competition of sects and denominations seem unimportant to them. Bahá'is are people of different economic and social classes. Through a common devotion, rich and poor mingle as equals and work together to establish a world order for all men and women. They are people of different national and racial backgrounds. But the Bahá'i teachings have given them a higher loyalty—the loyalty to humanity. Bahá'is have no "color line" or racial segregation. In this Faith, people of all races find equality with each other because they are equal before God.

Second, the Bahá'i Faith develops world-mindedness. Read these well-known Bahá'i quotations:..."Let your vision be world-embracing, rather than confined to your own selves."..."That one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race."

Third, the Bahá'i Faith offers a clear pattern of world order. It does not have any secret mystic doctrines; it does not have any priesthood or professional clergy. People find this a practical, spiritual religion with the mission of uniting the world in one common faith and one order. Bahá'u'lláh declared that in our time religion must unite people or else it has no social value. He declared that religion must show men how to build a just world. He emphasized that justice is the greatest good in the sight of God. To show men how to achieve this, He outlined a pattern of world order.

Bahá'u'lláh's vision of a united world begins with each man and woman. Individuals must have high moral standards and a new basis of belief if they are to become citizens of one world.

Bahá'is believe in one God, even though men have called Him by different names. God has revealed His Word in each period of history through a chosen Individual Whom

Bahá'is call "the Manifestation of God." He restates in every age God's purpose and will. His teachings are a revelation from God. Abraham, Moses, Buddha, Zoroaster, Christ, and Muhammad were Manifestations of God. Each gave men divine teachings to live by. Bahá'is believe that true religion is the real basis of civilized life.

Since there is one God, these Manifestations of God have each taught the same religious faith. They have developed and adapted it to meet the needs of the people in each period of history. This unfoldment of religion from age to age is called "progressive revelation." Bahá'u'lláh, the Founder of the Bahá'i Faith, is the Manifestation of God for our time.

This is the basis of Bahá'i belief: one God has given men one Faith through progressive revelations of His Will in each age of history, and Bahá'u'lláh reveals the Will of God for men and women of the present age. This basic belief enables Baha'is to unite and work together in spite of different religious backgrounds.

The Oneness of Mankind is like a pivot around which all the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh revolve. This means that men and women of all races are equal in the sight of God and equal in the Bahá'i community. People of different races must have equal educational and economic opportunity, equal access to decent living conditions—and equal responsibilities. In the Bahá'i view, there is no superior race or superior nation.

The Bahá'i Faith originated in Persia (Iran) in 1844. In that year a young Man who called himself the Bab (or "Gate") began to teach that God would soon "make manifest" a World Teacher to unite men and women and usher in an age of peace. The Bab attracted so many followers that the Persian government and the Islamic clergy united to kill him. And they massacred more than twenty thousand of his followers.

In 1863 Bahá'u'lláh announced to the few remaining followers of the Bab that he was the chosen Manifestation of God for this age. He called upon people to unite; he said that only in one common faith and one order could the world find an enduring peace. He declared that terrible wars would sweep the face of the earth and destroy the institutions and ideas that keep men from their rightful unity.

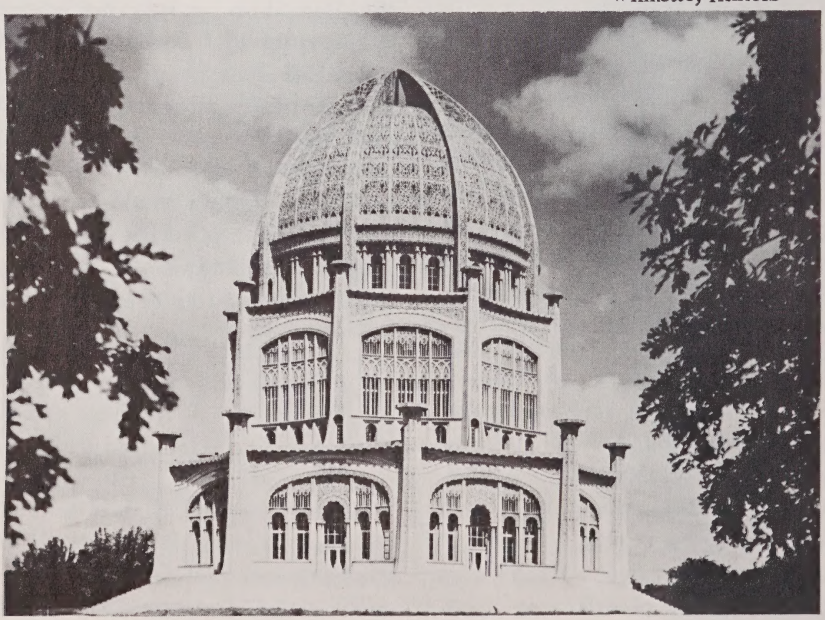
But Bahá'u'lláh was not greeted with enthusiasm by the religious leaders of Islam. As they saw his faith spread, their hatred grew. They forced him into exile—first to Baghdad, then to Constantinople, to Adrianople, and finally to 'Akka, Palestine. There he died, still an exile and prisoner, in 1892.

Bahá'u'lláh appointed 'Abdu'l-Baha, His eldest son, as the Interpreter of His teachings and the Exemplar of the Faith. Under the leadership of 'Abdu'l-Bahá the Faith was introduced to Europe and America. After he was freed from prison in 1908, 'Abdu'l-Baha made several missionary journeys. In 1912 he was in America for eight months during which time he laid the cornerstone of the Baha'i Temple in Wilmette, Illinois.

In 1921 'Abdu'l-Bahá died and left a will naming his eldest grandson, Shoghi Effendi, the first Guardian of the Faith and the interpreter of the teachings. Under Shoghi Effendi's direction the Bahá'is throughout the world have adopted an administrative order that is an application of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings for a world order. Thus Bahá'is have begun to practice in their own affairs the social teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

Bahá'is know from increasing experience that differences of nation, race, class, and religion can be removed by the uniting power of Bahá'u'lláh. Bahá'is know from increasing experience that this Faith can save men and women from the hatreds, the pessimism, the corruption, and the materialism of our age. They know this because they have seen it and experienced it. They invite you to investigate this Faith and share in this spiritual adventure.

BAHÁ'I PUBLISHING TRUST
Wilmette, Illinois



House of Worship of the Bahá'i Faith, Wilmette, Ill.

THE COMMON FOUNDATION OF ALL RELIGIONS

The foundation of all the divine religions is one. All are based upon reality. Reality does not admit plurality, yet amongst mankind there have arisen differences concerning the manifestations of God. Some have been Zoroastrians, some are Buddhists, some Jews, Christians, Mohammedans, and so on. This has become a source of divergence whereas the teachings of the holy souls who founded the divine religions are one in essence and reality. All these have served the world of humanity...All have guided souls to the attainment of perfection.

—Bahá'i Publishing Trust

PROGRESSIVE REVELATION

The revelation proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh, His followers believe, is divine in origin, all-embracing in scope, broad in its outlook, scientific in its method, humanitarian in its principles and dynamic in the influence it exerts on the hearts and minds of men. The mission of the Founder of their Faith, they conceive it to be to proclaim that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is continuous and progressive, that the Founders of all past religions, though different in the non-essential aspects of their teachings, "abide in the same tabernacle, soar in the same heaven, are seated upon the same throne, utter the same speech and proclaim the same Faith." His Cause, they have already demonstrated, stands identified with, and revolves around, the principle of the organic unity of mankind as representing the consummation of the whole process of human evolution. This final stage in this stupendous evolution, they assert, is not only necessary but inevitable, that it is gradually approaching, and that nothing short of the celestial potency with which a divinely ordained Message can claim to be endowed can succeed in establishing it.

— Shoghi Effendi.

GOD IS EVERYWHERE

Clara R. Lain

GOD IS EVERYWHERE and within every man's reach.

This was proved to me years ago when my nine year old daughter and I lived in an apartment house, four stories high including the basement. One sun-kissed day, we decided to go to the roof for a sun bath and took pillows and blankets from a storage room, kept unlocked on the fourth floor.

After basking a few hours in the sun on the roof, my little girl and I decided we had had enough and walked slowly down the stairs from the roof to the fourth floor below. Here, our eyes were blurred due to the sudden change from the bright light above to the semi-darkness below. So I felt my way cautiously along the wall of the fourth floor to the door of the storage closet. My daughter and I were loaded with blankets and pillows, and she hung tightly to my skirt with one hand, while I was opening the closet door; then began feeling for the light switch which I knew was on the right side, just inside the doorway. But I couldn't find it and was very much annoyed because my daughter kept tugging on my skirt and saying, "Mother, this isn't the right closet - it's on the floor below!"

I knew it wasn't but as she still insisted I became more and more irritated while continuing to feel for the light switch.

After standing there for what seemed like hours, I thought, "What is the matter with me?" Why don't I put the blankets and pillows on the floor, step inside, find the light switch and then put the blankets and pillows on the shelf where they belong!"

But still I could not move. Then as if in answer to my unspoken question, I heard a bell-like voice, apparently from no where, say, "Yes, why don't you step inside? But think before you do!"

SUDDENLY I KNEW that my daughter and I were standing on the very edge of the freight elevator shaft. Just one step forward and we would have been killed or seriously injured in the fall four stories to the basement.

Thus I learned that God does answer our expressed and unexpressed prayers if we sincerely believe in Him as being everywhere, instantly available for all our needs.

A MIRACLE OF MENTAL HEALING

Mildred Long

"I had walked the floor for ten days," said Carl to me, looking back over the previous six months during which we had been having conversations. "I had flung myself in desperation on the floor that morning and cried out, 'Oh, God, help me!' Then you came....After that first conversation I realized I was sick in my soul."

THE FIRST DAY I saw Carl at the mental hospital we sat out on a bench under the trees. It was a balmy fall day. I let Carl take the lead. He had just finished reading the account I had written of my own emergence from emotional confusion. So he plied me with questions. I explained to him my condition and how I learned to use prayer and positive thinking to overcome depression and fear.

Then we talked about prayer. He said he had been praying for the past three weeks—the first time in his life. To give him the feeling of relaxation and receptivity in prayer, I suggested: lie in the sun and let it warm your entire body. Make of this a spiritual exercise and fill all your inner consciousness with this light and the warmth of God's love. He asked how he could touch God and know what God is like. I told him he had already touched God, for his desire to pray was response to God's seeking him.

I gave him Dr. Rolph Alexander's suggestion to one who has a problem: Do not identify yourself with the problem. Set it off in front of you and talk to it something like this: "You are not me and I am not you. I am bigger than you are. And certainly God and I are bigger than you are."

AT THE AGE OF FIVE Carl had suffered emotional trauma so great it had blocked his development. He had gone through college and trained for a profession. But now at the age of thirty-two the emotional strain had become too much for him. Fears, guilt, anger, deep depression had sent him to the hospital. Everything available had been done for him and he seemed no better. But a prayer group was praying for him.

During our third visit he said he was learning to talk to God as a Friend, as a Father, and he was saying the 23rd Psalm this way: "You are my Shepherd." Often when he woke in the morning his first thought was: "Thank You, Father." During meditation he had visualized a stairway with God at the top and a light from behind enveloping God and coming down on-

to him as he climbed the stairway. Sometimes he deliberately put himself at the top at God's feet even though he had not climbed there yet. Sometimes he felt himself a channel through which God's love could flow. To this he added: "But I do not feel worthy." God gave me the reply: "You do not need to feel worthy, just willing."

On the fourth visit he told me that twice that week he had been able to ward off deep depression by beginning to work on it when it started. Prayer and deliberate positive thinking brought him back to peace and quietness.

NOW THE ASSETS were building up: he could touch God in prayer; give thanks; think himself out of depression; he was faithful with affirmations and daily meditation and prayer.

But in my heart was a deep concern because he did not know love. He lacked the feeling of ever having been loved, and of course he could have little love for another, nor for himself.

I let him talk freely and shed tears about his mother who had died when he was five. One day as we talked a new thought came to him. Perhaps he had felt hate toward his mother while she was sick in bed because she seemed to neglect him. Perhaps after her death he blamed himself, assuming his hate—thoughts had killed her. This opened a possible explanation of his guilt and self-hate.

I asked him, "How do you feel toward that little boy that was you?" He replied, "Compassion, understanding." Again I asked. "Would you like to comfort him?" and he replied, "Yes." Then I told him how God had laid it on my heart to suggest that he try loving that little boy. He said he would. That day we prayed together and always after that.

Anger was one of his problems, unreasonable anger on slight provocation. I suggested he deal with each small irritation as it arose. From this practice he experienced significant results.

WE OFTEN SPOKE of self-acceptance. Some suggested aids in this direction were: to evaluate himself, putting down both good and bad qualities and realizing he is a composite of both. Also realizing he is human and like all the rest of us. He should cultivate the same respect for himself that he held for me.

Other helps offered him included these:

1. Go to sleep on thoughts of God.

2. To solve a problem think on God, His love, and His provision—not on the problem.

3. The right use of the conscious mind will change the subconscious feeling.

4. Don't trust feelings. They are deceptive, until re-educated.

5. You have the power of choice—what you will think, what you will allow or not allow.

6. Only you can take the initiative to make the changes that need to be made.

7. Practice and discipline in the new thinking-feeling pattern are essential. It takes time to build a character, or change a personality.

8. Faith in God is essential. Faith includes belief, expectancy, receptivity, appropriation.

He experienced many difficult days: periods when impenetrable darkness settled down again and none of the new devices seemed to work; paroxysms of fear; upsurges of anger; feelings of guilt; fears of people.

From time to time there were also new revelations. One night he awoke with an awareness of God's love. He began to notice people and places, and things took on a new look. As we talked about his fears of people, he began to realize how unrealistic had been his assumptions and attitudes toward life.

IN A FEW WEEKS he was having his week-ends at home. In three months he left the hospital for a private home under the supervision of a nurse. Here he could do many kinds of work and had to face real life situations. After three more months he attended a spiritual camp and soon after that went to a distant city to start life in a new environment and with new interests.

He attended other spiritual camps. Writing to me from one of these, he said that a five year old boy was his closest friend at the camp. He turned up unexpectedly, sometimes silently taking his hand and just walking with him. Seeming to understand his moods, he was never in the way. When I read this, I felt that Carl had made his peace with that five-year-old boy he had so long rejected.

All during this experience I was awed and amazed at God's leading. Always there was something at hand to meet Carl's immediate need, the finding of which had been directed by God during the week. His eagerness, receptivity, and powers of appropriating spiritual truth always amazed me. His progress after more than two years continues unabated, and the sweetness of his true self draws to him many friends.

TRULY THE LIGHT HAS SHINED in the darkness and put the darkness to flight. "Praise God from whom all blessing flow." ✣ ✣

THE ROSARY

Mark Halpern

Many centuries ago in a monastery of southern France, there was a young monk called Brother Francis. From his earliest youth he had felt the call of the monastic life. Far from being the pale, slender type of studious youth, he had inherited a robust physique from his merchant father, who had once served with valor and high distinction in one of the Crusades.

Francis was not disappointed when he found himself a real monk in a monastery. His boyhood dreams had come true. Somehow it seemed to him that this was not the first time he had been in such surroundings. Everything, the monastery garden, the quiet monks in their long robes, the daily prayers, and the rituals, all had a familiar air about them. And it was not long before he had so thoroughly adapted himself to his new cloistered life, that one would have thought he had been born there.

But it was the monastery garden that he liked most of all. It was a lovely place, with a profusion of beautiful pink roses and white Camellias. And at the edge of the garden was a row of seven lofty poplars, upon whose branches there was never a lack of songbirds.

After the vespers, he would seek out one of the benches under the trees, and there he would take up his rosary. In the moonlight-bathed garden, with the songbirds singing softly in the poplars, and the rich fragrance of the flowers all about him, Francis felt that the world was indeed a beautiful place.

But now and then, after he had been there a year, disquieting thoughts would flit through his mind. Was it right for him to live a cloistered life in the peace and loveliness of such ideal surroundings? Was he not a strong, healthy man with the red blood tingling through his veins prompting him to action? The world outside the monastery, the villages and the towns, with their poverty and lost souls, was not a beautiful place. And yet it was the home of millions of his fellow men who were in need of help to make it a better place in which to live. And what was he, living in peace and quiet in the monastery, contributing to that end?

So his thoughts would often run... .

As the years passed and these restive thoughts persisted, Brother Francis became moody and visibly unhappy. Finally the abbot took him aside and asked him what was troubling his soul.

Brother Francis made open confession.

The abbot nodded with an understanding smile: "Believe me, my son, thy problem of conscience is nothing new. It is the usual crisis that has to be passed through by monks of ardent and fiery souls. It is not easy—but continue with thy prayers for strength and thou wilt conquer. I, too, shall pray for thee."

However, Brother Francis' conscience would not be appeased. He spent hours in the garden, praying and trying to quiet his tormenting thoughts that kept telling him prayers were of no use; that the outer world needed him, that only an active life could bring him peace. At such times he would rouse himself by sheer effort of will, as though challenging his thoughts, and begin to pray for all those in the world who were in pain or sorrow or fear. Such prayers would quiet him and oft he would drift off into sleep.

But on a certain day in the garden, he discovered that no matter how much he prayed for strength and for the good of humanity, he could find no rest. Something told him that he had reached the critical point in the battle to keep his faith in the choice of his monastic life.

He was right. Just at the moment when it seemed he could go on no further, he felt a wonderful feeling of lightness, as though he had slipped out of the body. Then he was lifted high in the air and went sailing through space. And it seemed to him that he was borne aloft on wings of prayer; for he could hear his own words, repeating over and over again his prayers for the troubled and afflicted of mankind. It was the steady intonation of his words that sustained his flight. He could not understand how that could be, but that it was so, he had no doubt.

He arrived over a densely populated town. Swiftly he descended toward one of the homes. In the next instant he was standing in a painter's studio where a young man stood holding a cup of dark liquid which he was about to raise to his lips. The artist's eyes were filled with utter hopelessness, as he spoke to himself:

"What have I then, to live for. My paintings are not wanted.

Better to drink this poison than to eat the bread of failure."

It was evident to Brother Francis that the artist did not see him, for the young man acted as though he were alone.

Then, as the artist raised the cup to his lips, a strange and wonderful thing happened. One of the many prayers that Brother Francis had sent forth to comfort the sorrowful in the world, began to make itself heard; not in the usual audible manner, but in an interior way. Brother Francis clearly heard the soothing sound of the prayer deep within himself; and somehow he could see that the young artist was hearing that prayer in the same way. For a change was coming over that disillusioned face. The hopelessness gradually left it; and a new light of courage and fortitude began to flame from his eyes.

Suddenly the artist flung the cup of poison aside; it crashed against the floor, breaking into bits and splattering the dark fluid in all directions.

"What a craven coward I have turned out to be. I'll put such living beauty on my canvases that the world will have to accept them!" And with those words, he seized brush and palette and went to work.

It was a wonderful day for Brother Francis. He was carried from place to place on the wings of his prayers. And everywhere he stopped, he was shown clear proof of the solace and strength and comfort his prayers were giving to weary and sorrowful souls.

At length, he was borne back to his bench in the monastery garden. He seemed to awake in his body as though returning from a beautiful dream. His heart was light and full of joy. A wondrous calm filled his consciousness. How beautiful the garden looked in the moonlight...how rich the fragrance of the roses...And never had he heard such pure celestrial melody from the songbirds high in the tall poplars.

Sighing blissfully, Brother Francis took up his rosary, while through his lips there breathed forth a prayer of humble gratitude....

* * * *

To each individual in life is appointed a way and a work. We are not asked to become proficient in another's natural field of activity. All that is expected is to find the way meant for us, doing the work our own soul has chosen for its earthly effort, to the best of our ability and with pure and selfless motive. Having done that, let us be content. ✣ ✣

PRESCRIPTION FOR SELF-PITY

Janet Hackney

Adam was the first man. He was also the first person to use an alibi. After he had eaten the forbidden fruit of the garden of Eden, he felt shame and disgrace. He condemned himself and we have been following his pattern ever since. He hid from his Maker. God was walking in the garden in the cool of the day. We, too, hide ourselves when we might enjoy the presence of the Spirit of God. When God questioned Adam he answered, "The woman Thou gavest me as a companion gave me the fruit and I ate." Eve had an alibi too. She said, "The serpent tempted me." An alibi is the prelude to self-pity.

I Kings tells us of the life and victories of Elijah. God called Elijah to be his prophet. God took special care of Elijah, the ravens fed him and he was to drink from a certain brook. Angels came to him with God's instructions and all went well for a time. Jezebel was in power then and sent for prophets after Elijah. Elijah's faith wavered and we read, "Lord, take away my life for I am no better than my fathers." And, "Everyone else has forsaken thee, Lord; I, even I only, am left; and they seek to kill me too." Here is a man deep in self-pity, the kind we all feel every now and then when our vitality is low. How quickly Elijah forgot that moment of glory when he heard God's call and the angel's instructions.

We never know when the devil of self-pity is watching us for an opportunity to undermine our faith. We never know how one small act will change our lives for better or worse. Pray that you will be given a will stronger than your moods and a faith that passes every test. God is always there, willing to strengthen and steady us if we reach out our hands.

The cure for self-pity can be given in two words, although putting it into practice takes a life time: *True humility*. Acquiring it involves our time, our talents, our intelligence and our money. True stewardship is the communication of love for all God's creatures into unselfish service to others. We must learn to respond to need, not to the merit of the one in need, and not to expect gratitude. We must learn to forget self. Someone has said that *it is not until a man forgets himself that he does something everyone else remembers.*

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT. . .

(The following two pages are drawn from a remarkable letter we received recently. The writer has given us permission to share with our readers these significant portions of his letter.)

....Most of my life I had been a 'good church-goer' and was considered an exemplary member of my community. But I was aware of no knowledge of God, personally. In my faith the habits necessary for its flowering are inculcated during the early years, and admonitions and restrictions have been most effective in keeping the congregation in the 'proper' channel to God—the only channel, we were taught.

WHAT INTUITION SEEMS imbedded in man, in his very core, that will send up urgent demands for clarification and for answers that are not found in his church affiliations? Emotionally and intellectually I thought that I was satisfied with what I had learned as a youth. But as I look back, I had my first experience of restless questioning while a young adolescent. This became a spasmodically recurring thing. Still I hewed to the path. I was told that this doubt, this restlessness, this aridity, was a cross to be borne, and I bore it, saddened by the increasing lack of emotional, intellectual and spiritual satisfaction.

After years of 'religion' for appearance's sake, I withdrew from my church and felt none of the fear of hell and damnation I had been taught to expect:—rather a sadness, a resignation, that God, if there was a God, would understand. I would like to say that I was prompted to look elsewhere for spiritual help, but this would be nonsense to one of my faith. For a lifetime I had listened to men whom I believed were far wiser, far holier than I could ever be, explain to me the truths about God and spiritual life, and I had come to believe that I couldn't believe most of what they told me. I felt no personal conviction of truth. I considered myself barren spiritually—that in me there could be no flowering of spiritual development.

AS THESE YEARS of dissatisfaction progressed, my personal disintegration progressed also. I led an increasingly disorganized life, without goal, ambition or meaning, and spent several years in dissipation, which seemed to release me from the strain of my many conflicts. Despite my family ties, and work to which I remained attached and in-

terested, I was completely without focus, even without normal human contact...as one who had died, which in effect I feel I had done. These years were indeed not living but existing.

After a period of collapse and despair a change gradually began to take place and with it came new friends who spoke to me of personal contact with God. *This aroused the old intuitions within me.* They spoke of prayer and meditation, at which I had failed in my earlier faith. I began to pray each morning for guidance during that day and I wondered how else I might learn to contact God directly. How much lay behind this statement, to 'contact God'? How could one start? How did others pray and meditate? This had to be on a personal basis—not through repetition of the words of some holy or saintly person, but through my own thoughts and words, my own effort to contact God.

WHAT IS THIS DESIRE which seems, through the ages, in all races, rooted in a person's being, seeking to reach to Something beyond?

My path toward personal satisfaction of this demand within me began to unfold. Strangely, even accidentally (it seemed), I found a teacher, one who told me of similar urges and questions he had had, and who had travelled further ahead along the road—who told me in simple words how one begins with simple spiritual practices to unlock, free, and develop what was already within me—within everyone. The words, the suggestions, were simple. They had the ring of truth. They had an almost echo-like quality, as if I had once known all this—said it and believed it.

And so I started and am on the Way. This way is, I believe, so basic an answer to an elemental demand that it almost seemed too simple. From daily practices came the steady growth in satisfaction to body and spirit, with ever-increasing rewards. Now I have 'ears to hear' and the words of holy men and prophets—some familiar, some new—startle me with the clarity of their message. Now I believe that the kingdom of God *is* within me, that I can discover it.

I HAVE READ with a sense of exciting discovery that this experience of mine is an ancient story. Wherever and whenever the spirit of man yearns and demands to know God, a teacher 'shall come to him.' This was believed, written and promised long before Christ. And this teacher comes to *him*—not to his church, not to his faith, not to his country, but to him personally. It is an individual experience. Through

another human being, he discovers the seed or potential within himself, and through the personal guidance of his teacher he shall know God--not after death, but by diligent perseverance here in this lifetime.

This is my experience to date. It is a full life and a rewarding one. The road ahead is rich and promising....

— *Charles Cox*

Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

—St. Paul.

THE THREE TRIUMPHS

Each moment of existence
is a physical triumph;
Each feat we achieve,
a triumph of the mind;
Each difficulty overcome,
the soul's triumph—
Together they sum up
the struggle of mankind.

Each moment we live,
Each feat we achieve,
Each difficulty overcome,
is a moment's reprieve
In the determined return
of our purified soul
To its Father's home—
its immortal goal.

—Clara Ullrich Samuels

CAN GOD BE EXPERIENCED?

Swami Ritajananda

(Continued from June issue)

BROADLY SPEAKING, the experience of God has been presented in two forms: the impersonal and the personal. But they are not completely opposed. A personal experience may be replaced by an impersonal experience. It often happens that the personal usually is replaced by the universal consciousness and the merging of the individual. Many passed through the personal experience, since it is easier. But the personal is inadequate due to its coloration derived by one's own traditional beliefs about the Personal God. The Christian sees Christ and the devotee of Krishna sees Krishna. The human relationship which is used as a discipline continues, but this is not the true picture of the final experience. Yet it is authenticated by hundreds of saints everywhere. They have said that God came to them, showed Himself, spoke to them, and so on. It is on these foundations that religions have sprung up. All the knowledge we have is based on experience. Theories are later developments issuing from past sensory experience. So we find that the founders of religions always started with some experience of theirs. Science appeals to people because, through its methods, people can experiment and find the truth for themselves. Although much of what goes under the name of religion is theory, they all have some basis of universal experiences.

All the different sects of the Hindus, the different paths or yogas, preach that not only is religion based on experience but it is open to anyone and at any time. The Vedic Rishis were men of religion experience who came across certain truths which they communicated to others. "All the religions of the world have been built upon that one universal and adamantine foundation of all knowledge—direct experience. The teachers all saw God; they all saw their own souls, they saw the future, they saw their eternity, and what they saw they preached." *(Vivekananda, Coll. Works,* VII, p. 126).

Although it is undeniable that there are many lunatics to whom God has spoken, yet who will say that all who had an experience of God were lunatics? Coming from a region beyond our ordinary life experiences, and affecting the whole personality of an individual, we are always surprised at the dynamic energy manifested after such an experience. Groups of fanatics are seen throughout the world, led by people who can draw a crowd around them, purely by their dynam-

ism. This is one of the reasons why people are suspicious about God-vision and mystic experiences. Yet there is the other side of the picture, where we find a host of men and women adored and eternally adorable. They speak of something that does not threaten or create fear, but is full of sympathy and love. They are never dogmatic about their experiences and, through their words, we see something valuable to humanity.

THE GREAT TEACHERS of the Upanishads never proclaimed any dogma or creed, but only gave their personal experiences and said one should seek the same. The God they referred to is not outside but within all. The Bhagavad Gita often repeats that the Lord resides in all human beings and he is the immanent God, the Lord that is close to all. The knowledge or realization of Him is said to lead us to immortality.

"His form is not an object of vision: no one beholds him with the eye. One can know Him when he is revealed by the intellect free from doubt and by constant meditation.

"When the five instruments of knowledge stand still, together with the mind, and when the intellect does not move, that is called the Supreme State." (Katha Up. II—3:9, 10)

Thus it has been referred to by these, who had direct knowledge. They point out that for an ordinary individual it is easy to go from the personal God to the Impersonal Absolute, from God with attributes—as love, mercy, justice, etc.—to the Absolute, where all these attributes have no significance, where all limitations are transcended. By the introspection of a purified mind, by self-analysis and concentration, one can dive deep into himself and reach the kingdom of heaven, and that is the only way.

Very often we get the impression that the state of Samadhi or super-consciousness is a mental condition brought about by external influences, or by mental exercises alone, forgetting its affiliation with ethical ideals and perfect self-mastery. The most valuable commodity in the world has the highest price and so it is no wonder that all our prophets asked us to give to Caesar what belonged to him. They have repeatedly urged us to shun everything of this world, since they are obstacles on the path. Without this sacrifice and all that pertains to our ego, there is no possibility of any entrance into the realm of God. If we read about the Samadhi of Ramakrishna, it should make it abundantly clear that it is not a state of an artificially induced mental condition. It is rather the purified mind that has gone to its source, completely disappearing. As pure water poured into pure wa-

ter merges, so does the intellect of a sage merge in God.

Although the experience of God lacks uniformity, it has some significant points in common. It is this which wards off all attacks on it by calling religious experiences purely subjective. Nor can we say it is a state brought to people living in solitude and given to fasting. A saint or a man of realization affirms that there is a reality different from what we experience in our daily life. They have felt its truth, but find language inadequate. Language is after all a means to convey ideas related to our perceptions. Whenever a subject beyond the reach of the senses has to be described, language falls. So we often find that metaphors, similes and analogies have to be used. Yet they do not give any clear idea. So we find that the statements have something in common and something not.

Secondly, the experience can be communicated. They could even give the experience to others under certain conditions. To deny that these are not possible means that we forget the limitations of our own faculties of perception. We forget that our knowledge of the world is still vague and we have not understood or known everything.

MANY PHILOSOPHERS consider that this knowledge of God is intuitive knowledge. The Hindu sages said it comes to the purified Reason. Intuitive knowledge is not that which comes out of reason, but from direct knowledge. It cannot be argued about. Like a feeling, such as love, it can be communicated to those who have had a similar experience and not to others. When a saint speaks of God, his attributes or his nature, he speaks from such experience. He knows that God is working through him. He knows for certain that the Lord is protecting him. When these statements are made by mystics, they have been similar and are accepted by those to whom they mean something, due to their own experience. Otherwise it is nothing.

Cardinal Newman once said: "Not all possible descriptions of headlong love will make one comprehend the delirium, if I never had a fit of it; nor will ever so many sermons about the inward satisfaction of strict conscientiousness create in my mind the image of a virtuous action and its attendant sentiments, if I am brought up to lie, to thieve and indulge in my appetites. Thus we meet men of the world who cannot enter into the very idea of devotion....because they know of no exercise of the affections but what is merely human." But once there is a background of some religious experience, however insignificant it be, then the words of these mystics immediately get a response.

When we get an abundance of material dealing with the experience of God and when it is a mixture of reliable higher experience and psychic or psychotic material, one may rightly ask: "What is the true and what is false? What is spiritual or divine and what is diabolical and madness?" The true has to be judged by its fruits. A good experience must produce good results. Neither a vision or an audition by themselves have any religious or spiritual significance. A true spiritual experience has to be judged by the true values it creates. When the invisible God made Himself known to people who have been venerated as sages and prophets, they showed astounding common features in their behavior. Already we have seen that, through superconscious experience, both the saint and the fanatic acquire a strong current of energy. But the saint is always seen to use it to a different purpose. He infuses confidence in others and the courage to work through life. It gives a meaning to their life and brings an inward satisfaction or joy. These are the positive marks or values by which we can judge God-experience. It is only then that one can be truly moral, not depending upon the police and society. This experience gives a conviction that cannot be shaken, and the deep conviction leads to a faith that can move mountains.

After this study of the various approaches and evaluations of philosophers, it is worthwhile to consider the matter from the standpoint of someone of modern times who could speak with authority and who could give clear and precise ideas to both questions: the meaning of God-experience and its value. Sri Ramakrishna, born in a religious group where people always believed God could be seen, he searched for Him from his early years and devoted his entire life to bringing that message to us. Repeatedly he told the young men around him:

"Really, God can be seen, my boys. As we are sitting and talking together, in the very same way God can be seen and conversed with. Truly and sincerely I say so." (Sayings, 9, 10)

"The manifestations of the Personal God is often a Spiritual Form, which is seen only by a purified human soul. In other words, these forms of God are realised by the organs of spiritual vision belonging to the spiritual body, which is derived from the Lord. So the perfect man alone can see these divine forms." (9, 11)

ON BEING QUESTIONED whether those who see God see Him with the ordinary fleshly eyes, the Master replied: "No, He cannot be seen with the physical eye. In the course of disciplines a special devotional body is created in you, with eyes and ears of love, and with them you

see and hear Him." Coming to the question of the marks of a person who has realised God, he said: "He who has seen the Lord is a changed being." (9, 36) "What are the indications of God's advent into the human heart? As the glow of dawn heralds the rising sun, so unselfishness, purity and righteousness precede the advent of the Lord...He is a perfect one: all humility and tenderness....When God is realised the world never looks empty. They serve all creatures. They see the Lord all around them." (9, 72)

In our brief study of the subject, we have considered different types of experiences: the experiences of the senses, the experience of feelings, and the experience of God. The experience of God is entirely different. It is not a physical experience, but spiritual. A person has to prepare himself to manifest his spiritual nature by removing all that is worldly; then only will it be possible to have an experience of God.

This experience is real and has a universal reality when seen from the essential features. People often have to go from the personal God to the Impersonal. In the Impersonal all names and forms disappear. There is absolute one-ness. The experience of God is hard to explain, because language invariably is related to things within the sense perceptions or old experiences. It has never functioned beyond the world. The more abstract the thought, the harder it is to express in words, because you are moving away from the worldly plane. It has much in common with intuition. It is midway between the sense world and the feeling world. It is direct and without any medium. Being outside the world, it requires metaphors and similes.

ALL RELIGIONS are based upon religious experience. Man had it and has it always. There are difficulties if we judge God-experience purely in terms of visual or auditory perceptions. These are minor and insignificant. They can be misleading and diabolical. But the best results are seen by the transformation that comes. Only if he or she has something to start with, or a little earnestness, can one understand the spiritual experience.

The flight of the alone to the Alone...

— Plotinus

RELIGION AND ITS CRITICS

Relition can no more receive an adequate interpretation in terms of its origin alone than can any other growing and developing thing. This is not to say that the interpretation in terms of origin is inappropriate, but merely that it is not complete; it is not complete because the religious consciousness is more than the ingredients from which it has emerged.

IT IS ALSO MORE that the psychological machinery which is involved in its emergence. Psychoanalysts are fond of pointing out that religion is sublimated emotion. Primitive lusts, social maladjustments and unacknowledged desires are mixed together in an unholy brew of which the religious consciousness is the distilled essence. The ingredients exposed, it is somehow implied that their outcome is discredited. Erroneously, for to lay bare the elements of which the religious consciousness may have been compounded is not to show that they *are* that consciousness....

IF IT CAN BE SHOWN, as the critics of religion allege, that our beliefs are the projections of our wishes, why is it only to our religious beliefs that the demonstration applies? People who have believed in the existence of God have admittedly wished to believe in the existence of God. Very well, then (so runs the criticism), their belief reflects nothing but their wish; it does not mean that there is a God. But the belief that religion is merely the reflection of a subjective need and therefore false, *reflects* nothing but the wish to find it so. It does not mean that religion *is* merely the reflection of a subjective need and *is* therefore false....

MODERN PSYCHOLOGISTS are continually deriding religious beliefs on the ground that they spring from tainted motives. Because of these motives, they hold, the believer is predisposed to find the evidence in favor of the belief he professes. That the religious apologist does, in fact, do these things is not doubted. But is the reasoning of religious apologists alone suspect? Modern psychologists, especially psychoanalysts, often argue as if, while everybody else's intellectual motives were tainted, they alone are animated by the single and simple desire to discover the truth. It never seems to occur to them that *the desire to discredit religion may be as strong as the desire to believe in it;* the motives for thinking it false as strong as those for thinking it true.

—C. E. M. Joad

BEHIND THE MASK

THE EARLY GREEK CULTURE contributed much to man's growth and his civilization, not only the depth and wisdom of their philosophies but their gift of insight into the life of man himself. One of their traditional forms of entertainment was the drama; here they employed most skillfully the use of masks to depict the emotions of the actors. In many ways this has a dual meaning for our life in its complex social and psychological patterns today.

With all our technological advances, our emotional and psychological problems remain basically the same as they were in ancient days. How often do we conduct our everyday activities behind masks, not simply the fundamental masks of joy, sorrow, indifference, pain, fear, etc., but the complicated mask designed to mislead, to convey one meaning to the outer world, while the inner conflicts and passions of the soul reflect an entirely different one.

As actors in the strange pageantry of human affairs we are all assigned different roles in the drama of life. We have come a long way from the simple masks of ordinary feelings: from the direct straightforward approach to our fellow humans to a much deeper conflict which shows in new masks.

We are adept at wearing the mask of deception. Behind this particular mask we administer wounds to the gentle defenseless soul. We push relentlessly on for the glory of our own ego. We live so much in our individual worlds that we fail to realize the fact that we are all a part of the whole and that the injury of one is the concern of all.

THE GREATEST TEMPTATION of all is to don the mask of hypocrisy—the pretense of one emotion while we are actually experiencing or indulging in the opposite. Too seldom do we truly use the mask of love, compassion and truth. Are we so advanced in our space era that we have forgotten the instruction of the gentle Galilean? Is it not now the time to unmask and give life our true face shining with the Christ light of love? The hour has struck, we must remove the last and subtlest mask of all—the temptation to deceive not just others, but ourselves.

Zelma S. Dennis

THE RETURN

Francis Merchant

LEGEND HAS IT that the Christ never forsook the human race even after returning to the Source of Light from which he had come. Strange tales are told of his activities. One such legend concerns the present age.

Seeing the increasing perplexities of humanity in the twentieth century, he turned towards the struggling sons of men and appeared among them.

In the first country to which he came, atheism was preached as the official doctrine of the state. The Christ, clad in humble garments, approached an official and spoke about the importance of the spirit in the lives of men.

"You are behind the times," the portly official said. "Take a look at our vast country and find out how well we have done without God. The grass grows, the sun shines, the cows give milk, nature yields a rich harvest—but all this happens without superstition and miracle. Will religion bring us larger crops, build better houses, increase industrial production, create more atomic bombs? If not, we have no need of it. We have enough to do in connection with the outer life without worrying about the inner. We need men to plough the soil, to excavate foundations, to build bridges, but not to moan and groan about the unrealities of the alleged kingdom within. Give us the earth and you may keep the airy domains of the spirit."

THE CHRIST TURNED AWAY and went to another country. He had trouble securing a visa, but after a series of searching examinations and the filling out of many form, he was permitted to enter.

In due time, he visited an archbishop and began to discuss with him the deep things of the spiritual life. The archbishop was greatly displeased by the unorthodoxy of his guest.

"We've spent two thousand years studying the scriptures," he said sententously, "and we've come to very specific conclusions. You, apparently, are dissatisfied with them, introducing a novel species of

free thought. We have enough of that already. In consequence, there are empty churches all over the world. To interpret our doctrines anew, we would have to alter our long-established traditions, modify ideas that were endlessly debated by theologians in the Middle Ages, amend the texts of the Church Fathers—and what would we accomplish by all this? You can see for yourself that it would be wiser to build on the old foundations than to disturb the work of centuries by undermining the pillars of dogmas. Please don't bother us with new doctrines."

Then the Christ journeyed to another country and ventured to speak to a psychologist.

"THE NEED FOR RELIGION," observed the analyst, "arises from a profound sense of insecurity in the psyche. Such inner disturbance manifests in a variety of ways. Some people take to gambling, others to liquor, and still others to religion. In each case, the individual is responding to compensatory forces that originate in mental tensions set up in childhood experiences. Saints and sinners are not so different at all; they are simply responding in diverse ways to the play of psychic forces. As to religion, that is simply a flight into fantasy, a seeking shelter from the realities of life in the realm of the abstract. We psychologists seek to orient people to life, not to inspire them to escape into a world of fancy."

Wandering further, the Christ came to another land and entered into conversation with a business man.

"Religion," said the merchant calculatingly, "would cut my profits in half. Where would I be in these days of high taxes if I were honest? What you are proposing when you speak of ethics in business is a radical innovation that would change the entire system of free enterprise. The power and prosperity of this nation have been achieved by men who rejected religion. You can always count on a man's greed, but seldom on his unselfishness. We business men have demonstrated that success can be solidly based on the hard foundations of dishonesty and self-seeking. You, for some strange reason, desire to discard the principles that have brought us greatness, wealth, and prosperity. It seems to me that your recommendations are unpatriotic and even subversive. Those who are dissatisfied with our wonderful system should go back where they came from."

FINALLY the Christ came upon a company of pilgrims walking a lonely road that stretched out to an endless distance. Steadily they walked on, although dark clouds gathered ominously on the horizon.

When the Christ discoursed on spiritual matters, his audience listened with rapt attention.

"Dark is the way and perilous," said one of the pilgrims, "and we await the Coming One who will brighten the Path by the light of his understanding. We search, we seek, we pray. Onward we march towards a goal that ever recedes. With the eyes of the heart do we try to see. Our faces are turned to the future. Eagerly do we look for the Coming One, seeking the light that will transform us utterly. If thou canst show us the Way, we are prepared to follow."

—*"So be it," said the Christ.*

—In THE COMMON GOOD

WIDOW'S PRAYER

Let sorrow wash all bitterness away,
All hate, all guilt, all wishes unfulfilled;
For courage and acceptance let me pray,
To carry on what your brave spirit willed;
In your exalted purpose let me find,
Through loving service, lasting peace of mind.

—Alice Mackenzie Swaim

THE CURSE OF SELF

"...IS THERE, DO YOU THINK, a single psychological process or pattern to be discovered beneath the many different interpretations of religious experience? I have thought that I could detect a pattern which might be described as a gradual increase of psychic tension, followed by a sudden letting-go, either working itself out involuntarily, as in most cases of Christian conversion, or deliberately set in motion by one of the many systems of spiritual exercises. Only when the individual will is stretched to the breaking point and snaps, can a higher Will take its place. Alan M. Watts, writing of Zen Buddhist discipline, says: 'It invites the aspirant to exert his ego to the utmost in order to find out by experiment that it is a socially induced illusion'. St. Paul says: 'Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ'—and here the underlying pattern seems to be expressed by a zealous attempt to live by the complete law, and then the final acceptance of failure: on the road to Damascus, perhaps....

"I READ RECENTLY an essay in which the author proved to his own satisfaction that the 'way of life' taught by the Bhagavad Gita is impossible to follow. He failed to see (what I didn't see myself until his blindness opened my eyes) that the impossibility for ordinary human nature is the whole point—the only success is failure. Ordinary human nature must die in the attempt to transcend itself if the attempt is to succeed.

"Perhaps some day science will find a way to immunize human kind against its most terrible disease, from which it has suffered since Eden: selfhood. The disease rages in me, and I am sure that I want to be cured..."

Edward Emanuel
Quitman, Ga.
(From a letter to FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER)

Success is to be measured not so much by the position one has reached in life as by the obstacles he has overcome while trying to succeed.

— Booker T. Washington

Book Review

THE PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY, by Aldous Huxley; Harper, N.Y., 1945, 312 pp, $4.00.

If a man tasted and drank milk in a country where milk was unknown (and whose existence was doubted), and described its wonderful properties, its color, what effect it had on him, he might not be believed; and if another man in another part of that country, independently, had the same experience, he might not be believed; but if a large number of individuals, all independent of each other, had the same experience and described it in essentially the same terms, then the honest scientific investigator, or the impartial agnostic, would have to conclude that milk existed.

If we substitute the direct experience of God for the experience of milk, Aldous Huxley's famous book on mystical experience, THE PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY, makes it equally difficult for any honest inquirer seriously to doubt the existence of a Divine Reality that is accessible to all men, if they are willing to follow the path which Huxley, reflecting the teachings of the great saints, clearly describes. The book was published in 1945 but is already a modern classic. It ought to be read by all of our readers and by anyone with any pretensions to spiritual things. The publisher calls it a "profound and memorable" work, and indeed it is.

The book jacket contains an outstanding summary of the purpose of the book and we can do no better than quote part of it:

"Knowledge is a function of being. Only the pure in heart can see God. Those who have the necessary modifications of their all too human nature, the illuminated saints and sages who alone are in a position to know what they are talking about—all, whatever their religion, make fundamentally the same report about the nature of Ultimate Reality.

"THE PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY is an anthology of their findings, embedded in a connective tissue of contemporary commentary and illustration. The book has been written and compiled not with the idea of 'founding a new religion', but of showing what happens to consciousness and character, to will and feeling and knowledge, when a member of any of the great historical faiths chooses to press on towards the goal, which all the saints and traditional theologians are agreed in regarding as man's Final End. Only in the light of these revelations of what every human being is capable of becoming, ought to become and is ultimately destined to become, can we fully and clearly understand what in fact we are..."

On the opposite page we have printed some representative passages but they give no more than a hint of the scope, depth and beauty of this book. — *P. H.*

From THE PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY

The Perennial Philosophy is the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man's final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being....

Knowledge is a function of being. When there is a change in the being of the knower, there is a corresponding change in the nature and amount of knowing...It is only by making physical experiments that we can discover the intimate nature of matter and its potentialities. And it is only by making psychological and moral experiments that we can discover the intimate nature of mind and its potentialities....

No progress in ethnology will be achieved until scholars rid themselves of the curious notion that everything possesses a history; until they realize that certain ideas and certain concepts are as ultimate for man, as a social being, as specific physiological reactions are ultimate for him as a biological being....

Whereas most contemporary thinkers make an attempt to describe human nature in terms of a dichotomy of interacting psyche and physique....all the exponents of the Perennial Philosophy make, in one form or another, the affirmation that man is a kind of trinity composed of body, psyche, and spirit....

There is no harm in art or science, but a great deal of good, provided always that these activities are not regarded as ends, but simply as means to the final end of all life....

MOST EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN AUTHORS of books about religion and metaphysics write as though nobody had ever thought about these subjects, except the Jews, the Greeks and the Christians of the Mediterranean basin and western Europe. This display of what, in the twentieth century, is an entirely voluntary and deliberate ignorance is not only absurd and discreditable; it is also socially dangerous.

DAMASCUS

SAUL OWED HIS CONVERSION neither to true love, nor to true faith, nor to any other truth. It was solely his hatred of the Christians that set him upon the road to Damascus, and to that decisive experience which was to decide the whole course of his life. He was brought to this experience by following with conviction the course in which he was most completely mistaken.

— *C. G. Jung*

(It has also been suggested that Paul's obsessive hatred of the Christians involved an equally obsessive concentration on the strange personality responsible for their absolute faith: Jesus Christ. Hence, just prior to the Damascus road experience his mind was completely filled with the thought of Christ, with wonder about him, with intense fascination at his greatness. So he was in an ideally receptive condition for the vision that came to him. — *Ed.)*

VERANDA HOUR

The katy-dids
Reiterate
Prophetically
That time grows late

They count the pulse
In echoed words
Of Summer's night
To warn the birds

(And man as well)
That Autumn days
Will soon demand
A change of ways.

— Carla Patsuris.

NOTICES and COMMENTS

BAHÁ'I FAITH. We are pleased to devote more than four pages in this issue (pp 5-9) to a presentation of the major aspects of the Bahá'i World faith, one of the significant religious movements of the last century. If any of our readers wish to know more about this religion and its principles, they should write to the National Bahá'i Headquarters, 536 Sheridan Road, Wilmette, Illinois. We wish to remind those of our readers who are Bahá'i members that a certain number of extra copies of this issue have been set aside for distribution among their friends in the Bahá'i movement who are not familiar with *FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER.* We hope they will not hesitate to write us and let us know how many copies they can effectively distribute.

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CONTRIBUTORS. We are happy to welcome to our pages the following writers: Mrs. Clara Ullrich Samuels of Newark, N. J.; Alice Mackenzie Swaim of Dillsburg, Penna; Clara R. Lain of Van Nuys, Calif.; Mr. Charles Cox of Nahant, Mass.; and Mr. Edward Emanuel of Quitman, Ga. Mr. Cox and Mr. Emanuel are represented on pages 18 and 31 respectively with eloquent excerpts from letters to FIP, and we hope their example will inspire other readers to write to us as fully and frankly as they desire. Miss Swaim's poem *Widow's Prayer* appears on page 30; we are pleased to report that she will be with us again in a forthcoming number. Miss Lain's *God is Everywhere,* on page 10, is the record of a true experience and is the kind of contribution we would like to print more frequently. Mrs. Samuel's *The Three Triumphs* appears on page 20. She is widely known among poets in this country as the editor of the Garden State *Messenger.*

~

NEW ADVISOR. Miss Georgia H. Marin has accepted our invitation to become a Fellowship in Prayer Advisor for the Eastern Zone. Both background and experience have nurtured in her a deep interest in peace and world fellowship and have well qualified her to be an FIP Advisor. For twenty-five years she was active in settlement house work and for fifteen years was director of the Margaret Fuller House in Cambridge, Mass. Now retired, Miss Marin lives in Nashua, N. H. She is serving as president of the local YWCA. We are very happy to have her with us in an advisory capacity.

~

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A NEW RELIGION

A CONVERSATION ABOUT Divinity and Faith has suggested to me a great, a stupendous idea, to the realization of which I feel myself capable of devoting my life. This idea is the founding of a new religion corresponding to the present state of mankind...a practical religion, giving bliss on earth. I understand that to accomplish this the conscious labor of generations will be needed. One generation will bequeath the idea to the next...Deliberately to promote the union of mankind by religion—that is the basic thought which, I hope, will dominate me.

—From the Diary of Leo Tolstoy
(Written when he was 27)

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